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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0029
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RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
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SUBJECT: Rio Radar - November 19

REF: RIO DE JANEIRO 353; RIO DE JANEIRO 329

¶1. (U) Rio Radar is a regular compilation of key economic, political, commercial, and other developments in the states of Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, Minas Gerais, Espirito Santo, and Sergipe. This week's subjects:

NATION-WIDE BLACKOUT

¶2. (U) On November 10, a massive power outage affected 18 states, leaving an estimated 87 million residents without power and leading to persistent doubts over the cause, as well as concerns over Brazilian energy infrastructure. In Rio de Janeiro, the blackout lasted between two and three hours, shutting off electricity for some 6 million residents and disrupting the water supply for over 1 million. According to accounts from the Ministry of Mines and Energy and the National Power Grid Operator (ONS), lightning strikes caused three transmission lines between the Itaipu hydroelectric station and Sao Paulo to fail, causing a cascading blackout that led to the loss of 28,000 megawatts - or 45 percent of total Brazilian consumption at that instant - of electricity. Experts outside of the government dispute this explanation, however. Further Mission reporting on the incident and related concerns will be provided septel.

UNHCHR PRAISES FAVELA PACIFICATION, WORRIED OVER POLICE VIOLENCE

¶3. (U) On November 10, 2009, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) Navanethem Pillay visited the favela community of Santa Marta, the same favela Rio Principal Officer toured on October 16 (reftel A). Minister for Racial Equality Edson Santos and Rio de Janeiro State Secretary for Public Security Jose Beltrame accompanied the visit. While praising Rio de Janeiro's Favela Pacification Program and the efforts of Rio's Pacification Police Units, or UPP, (reftel B) in bringing order to the community, Pillay criticized the level of violence in other favelas. "There still is an unacceptably high level of violence and killings, especially from police actions," she said. According to the Rio de Janeiro Institute of Public Security, Rio de Janeiro military police were involved in some 10,216 killings related to resisting arrest since 1998. During her trip to Brazil, Pillay also visited Salvador and Brasilia.

NEW STEEL PLANT TO INCREASE RIO'S CO2 EMISSIONS BY 76 PERCENT

¶4. (U) According to forecasts by the Rio de Janeiro State Secretary

for Environment, a new plant under construction in Rio de Janeiro state by steel manufacturer CSA (Companhia Siderurgica do Atlantico) will emit 9.7 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the atmosphere annually, increasing the city's carbon dioxide emissions by 76 percent. CSA is a partnership between German Thyssenkrupp Steel Group (73 percent share) and Brazilian mining company Vale - CVRD (27 percent share). In response, the Brazilian Minister of Environment and the Rio City Council's Environmental Commission plan to "pressure" the company to seek new technologies and plant millions of trees to mitigate the emissions.

¶15. (U) Thyssenkrupp is constructing the 6.7 billion USD plant - the largest private investment in Brazil over the past 12 years - in Western Rio de Janeiro state. The plant, which will produce over 5 million tons of steel plates per year, envisions the creation of over 17,000 new jobs, as well as the construction of two new port facilities.

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